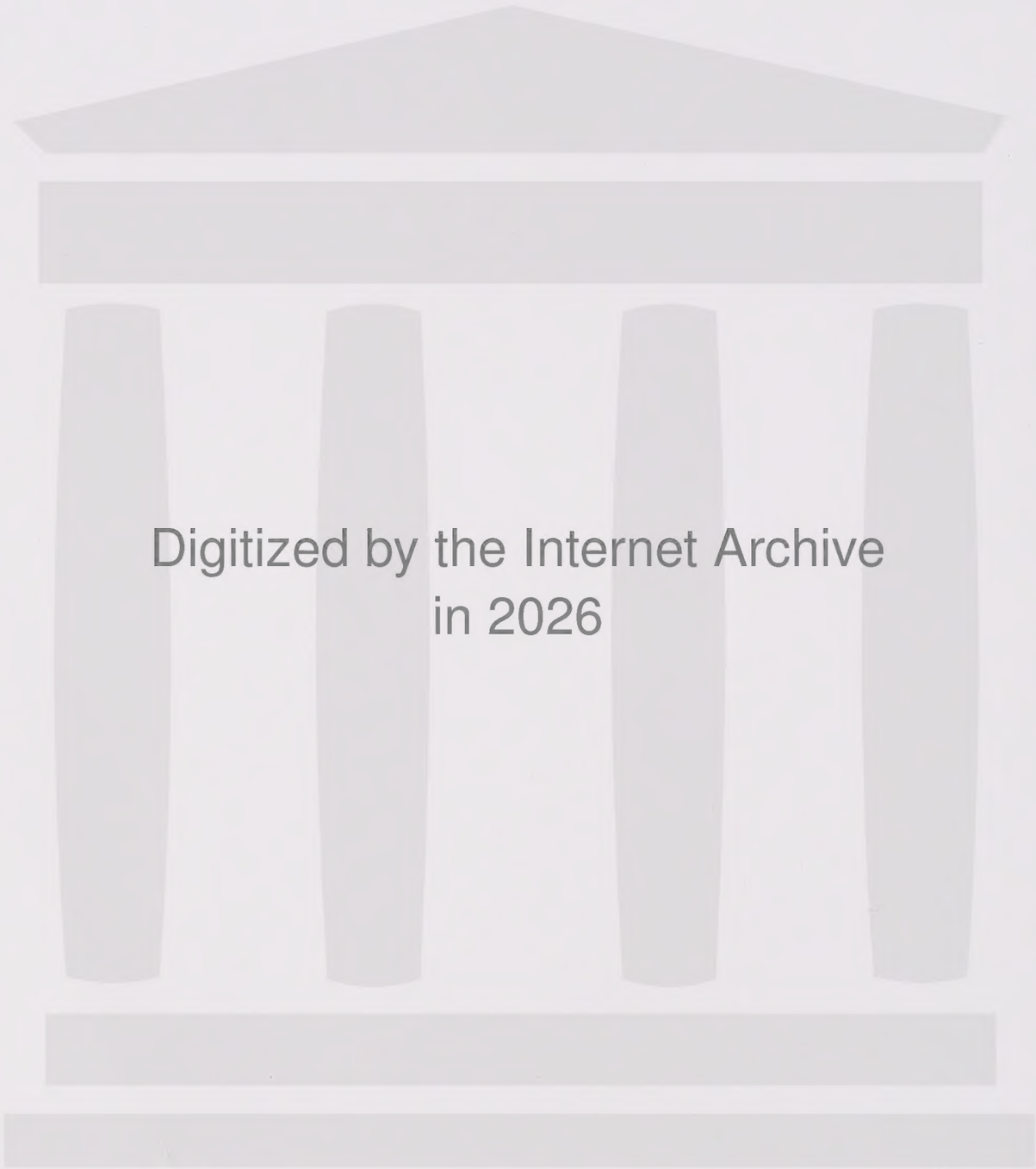
Life,
Love,
College,
Etc.

Theodor Holm Nelson


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/lifelovecollegee00theo

Life, Love, College, Etc.

Theodor Holm Nelson

Mindful Press

© Copyright 1959 Theodor Holm Nelson.

© Copyright 2014 Mindful Press
3020 Bridgeway #295
Sausalito CA 94965, USA

SocDepInsideTitle-D2
=== 14.03.04

Introduction to *Life, Love, College, Etc.*

(Originally entitled *We Need A Sociology Department*)

HOW DID ALL THIS HAPPEN?

My senior year at college (starting fall 1958) was fraught and overcommitted from the beginning, and I have no idea why I consented to write a column. Except that I couldn't resist the opportunity.

I decided to write about everything-- Life, Love, College, Etc. However, I didn't call the column anything like that. Instead I used the opportunity for academic politicking.

THE SNEAKY PROPAGANDA TRICK

I was peeved that Swarthmore at that time had no sociology department, so I called the column "We Need A Sociology Department", and discussed the matter no further. But having that slogan in the paper every week or so was surprisingly effective as a propaganda technique. As the year passed, whenever sociology was mentioned, I would hear people say "Yes, we need a sociology department." This elementary trick worked better around the campus than I hoped. And of course Swarthmore now *has* a department of sociology (and anthropology). However, I can hardly take credit for this inevitability.

THE STYLE

College was a crazed, stressed trance, and so was this. I hurriedly wrote each column in an hour or so, usually on Sunday night (I think the deadline was 9 pm), and rushed on to the next thing. The tense, terse phrasings and lurching style of punctuation were due to the pressure and lack of time. In turn, the unusual rhythmics of the sentences became the column's trademark.

The commercial typesetters used by the *Phoenix* were amazingly faithful to what I sent in. (You will note only a few corrections by hand.) Those were days when style was understood and respected.

Theodor Holm Nelson, March 2014
The Internet Archive, San Francisco

A solemn column; with now & again a belly-laff:
THE PHOENIX' OWN

WE NEED SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT.

Which being a disjunct discourse
(→ if not Handbook ←)
ON

Eu-Daemonism at Smore College:

HOW GOT, FED AND THEN RELINQUISHED.

More suggestive than literally so;
but ribe, never-the-less, with
good advice and shrewd observings.

A COLLECTION OF SERMONS.

Corrected by the author, Mr. Nelson; certified by him to be true and right.

DEDICATED TO TONY POOL.

© Copyright 1959 by Theodor Holm Nelson.
All rights reserved, including publication for fun or profit, public reading, ridicule, eating & use in testimonials.
→ BUT
Your right to enjoy this book can never be reserved!
The author.

RANGES ALL SUBJECTS.
Highly condensed for the busy reader.

Price subject to change without notice.

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE, 1959.

The Good Old Days.

The first indoctrination to which the freshman is fair prey is the knowledge that the school is going to pot. Ordinarily this story is imparted haphazardly by an upper-classman or father-figure of some sort, with unreliable variations. Here, hence, is a standardized single version, that the newcomers may all get it straight.

When we were freshmen, things were sure different. The atmosphere of the whole college was another thing entirely. Why in those days you could order beer from the hoagy man and you found Capezios in the ML ashbin. Everybody who was anybody wore dungarees, while anybody wearing them today is looked at as though he didn't have them on. People don't go barefoot any more, and even holding hands in public is askanced as flagrante delicto.

Those were the days when there were fraternity men on one side, and the others on the other side, and you knew what you stood for. These days, there are a lot of vociferous neutrals who botch up ideological lines.

Those were the days when all the porch people used the phrase "OK" for what was acceptable, and a lot of things were OK and shared. Beards and dungarees and folk music—especially folk music.

Rinzler and Christiansen and Shahn played banjos and mandolins and things all over the lot, and Jimmy Mead wore lumberjack shirts with her ermine-and-velvet cape.

And there were campus politics then, too. When they cancelled the Folk Festival—and we all knew why, although they called it "reconsideration"—there was a monster protest rally in Commons. Those were the days when Commons was homey and carpetless and unchintzed—before they called in Howard Johnson; you could relax and sit on the table. That night the people crammed it to the eaves, which were higher then, and everybody made speeches about riots and strikes, ending with a petition, which fizzled. It was begrudged that not even Volksgeist could lick the administration; but at least we put up a fight. Catch today's epicene students complaining about anything, even the food. Instead of a Folk Festival, we were given a Campus Carnival, good clean fun for everybody, which was boycotted by all the OK people. It has since become an annual event.

There were other campus politics. Students for Democratic Action had hundreds of members, and the interlocking Students Independent Union—run by the Rush-Temin-Schifreen axis—came out for the freedom of the individual at all costs, except when it came to granting haircuts.

Boy, those were the days. You can't put it all across in a lump; it was the nuances that made life different. The bathroom walls, for example, were considered an expressive outlet by the genuinely literate; one brilliant penman became so widely read he was called "The Prime Mover". Today, by contrast, all you see are the great National Jokes. The food was worse, and there were strange green pockets in the scrambled eggs, which tasted powdered. The dining room was differently engineered. The LIT, now called the ROC, was less stagnant, having just taken over from the DODO. Everybody had master keys, since social facilities were short (Somerville was not yet opened). There were more bicycles. Collections were much worse, and the Committee once had the effrontery to put on an Anglican minister. You could snitch things from the College Pharmacy that are better hidden now; Ryan was drawing posters; there was nightly poker in ML Four; the Student Council did nothing.

But now times have changed. It is for you, the Freshmen, and you others, the Sophomores, etc., to carry on, work, grunt, whiffle, think, rail, joke, cry, digest, sing; in short, to build a new society. Just bear in mind that you can never live up to the past. There were giants on the campus in those days.

3
Freshman Girls

It is true that the upperclass men are evincing much interest in the freshman girls. This is a perfectly normal impulse, and should be openly discussed in order to dispel the fear and shame connected with it. The more often we discuss it, the less guilt we will have. (If we discussed a thing all the time we would have no guilt at all, but practical limitations exist, so we must suffer a little guilt in order to have time for anything else. But, in general, discussion, discussion and more discussion pave the road to relentless health.)

A number of causes drive the upperclass men to vulch, letch or even birddog the freshman girls. One is the girls' quality of mystery, arising from a lack (not theirs) of specific information. Their desirability is enhanced by the general demand they are in, and the self-fulfilling fear that they will all be snapped up before too long. Their unsullitude for a time outweighs the older girls' smoothness. They are a prestige good, enjoyed (like English Ovals, squash racquets and the Alsops) less for themselves than for the feeling of being in their league—an assurance, for the upperclass man, that he hasn't gotten older at all.

And, of course, their very newness is delicious. More attentive to shadows and smirks, they are all the more satisfactorily oglable. They are more interested in you, and better impressed by the insubstantial; so you can expatiate on your past. But that they make a show of knowing little about you is misleading. Actually, their sources of information are disarmingly good, and a girl will know a great deal more about you than you think. If you are unlucky this material is exaggerated and bitter; if lucky, she has heard you are a boy to trust, which has undoubtedly changed over the summer. The word on these matters is often passed by big sisters who are known frumpets, discards, itches and grunts. However, they will later get the freshmen men.

It is interesting to take note that these girls, mostly, are the "war babies" of the '40s; some do not remember V-E Day, let alone Pearl Harbor. The upperclassman who dwells on this will come to believe himself a cradle robber, or old reprobate; it is best to think about the converse, that sunny youth which the newcomer may bring smiling into his gross, repetitive life. For it is a fact that whatever her personal qualities, the freshman girl has a strident mecomial newness that will enchant the most jaded heart. Whether gordled* bovarine or sulky nymphet, haughty hoyden or wholesome Wisconsinian, hers is the song of sanguine spring. It might jocularly be remembered, though, that unaided nature does not always take its course, but just audits:

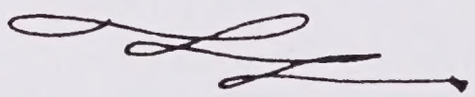
As all freshmen are on the defensive, so the freshman girl is very much on the defensive. She knows (from aunts, doctors, nuns, geometry teachers, counsellors) what to look out for; trying to correct her impression is doing it the hard way. Salmon also do it the hard way.

* fatly girdled.

4. From a letter to the editor of the good old Phoenix.

A. Harris Fairbanks '62 has come right to the point. The real pressure on the new student here is to "stop conforming and be like everyone else." Yes, many Swarthmore students are conforming to non-conformity!

Many people seem to think that just by acting "different" they assert their individualism. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we know so well here. "Non-conformity" is in fact just another kind of conformity in a more insidious guise, as President Smith has often said. Those who try to be different are even more the slaves of the group, as they are making a fetish of it. The only way to *really* be a non-conformist is to look as much as possible like everyone else, and think different thoughts. That is the real independent spirit. Those persons who have misguidedly thought they were non-conforming can only straighten out by refusing to conform to the conforming to non-conformity that they are conforming to and conform to the non-conforming to non-conformity that is the real non-conformity. Unfortunately they will probably never be able to burst the bonds tying them to this hackneyed way of life, never be able to question their outmoded values. For a while anyhow.



The Atheist's Prayer.

In that instant I am most lonely, let me be relieved.
To know my superiorities without rudeness; to know my faults without hedging, permit me.
Of the kinds and depths of my commitments, let me be aware.
From the too-many pains of self-examination, let me be relieved.
From avoiding what I must, strengthen me.
From my better decisions, let me not turn.
From taking too much, of food, of sleep, of others: stop me.
Let others be safe from me, I from them.
Tell me a time to end remorse.

5

Filler.

—

How can you claim to be an atheist? Surely you must believe in something!

I believe in natural laws and in love and peace and people and good cooking. However, I do not believe in any God.

But how can you prove there is no God?

If (but only if!) it can be reasonably proven that there is no gorilla around the corner, no man in the moon and no skeleton in the closet, there are also very strong doubts for all the God-evidence: the bad logic (cause, perfection, existence) and the untrue empiricism (revelation, miracles).

But God is really the spirit of all the things that are and should be.

Hardly.

But that's my definition.

Not the correct one. A god, within the historical bounds of the definition, is humanesque, of special power and composition, and, to an extent, interested in the human world, influencing both human experience and the inanimate. Anything possessing none of these characteristics cannot be a God.

But they're still trying to find out what God *is*, just like "normal," "culture" and "gravity."

The confusion is in your mind only. "Normal" is A) a statistically defined score on some kind of test; B) a standard or usual pattern; C) the psychiatrist's "desirable." A is clear as a bell-shape; B, hard to establish; C varies. "Culture" is A) refinement-ease-sophistication, B) the content of freshman humanities courses (elsewhere), C) the life-way of groups of people who behave generally alike. "Gravity" is somewhat known, as our success with applied relativity shows; what we do not know is how to manipulate it directly.

But that's just semantics, isn't it?

It's just clarification, yes.

Can't you use a word any way you like?

Not if you're talking to somebody else. Of course, modern theology hinges on three suppositions: there is no truth, nothing is certain and words have no meaning. But each of these premises is weird.

You're not open-minded.

Open-mindedness is overrated. Is every retinal flicker, stomach rumble or epiphany to cause an upheaval of premises? But give me a good argument and I'll think about it.

You probably had unpleasant experiences in a church which caused you to rebel. I'm glad that never happened to me. We both believe what we want, and I'm glad I'm happy.

You clog the drains with irrelevancies. Though we both may have bad reasons for our respective beliefs, I think I can also adduce good ones. (You may have noticed them passing by a moment ago.) But I'm glad you're happy.

Do you believe science can solve all our problems?

Only if applied by the wise and imaginative, when all our goals are agreed on. So, no.

I think you'll grow up eventually.

Instead of replying, I'll let you have the last word. You need it more than I.

I've said all I have to say.

Room, Sweet Room

It may not be home, but it's much, and so the problem of "decorating" the room, or systematically cluttering it, may have deep-seated effects on how everything else works out. You know what happens otherwise. Or anyway.

But decorating the room may help, or so it always seems, so we might examine several things which are worth trying. The mural, for example. A well-designed mural, on such a topic as "Life" or "History," can be a source of endless inspiration and vicarious adventure. This is one of the projects which are likely to cross the House Director, and you will have to decide before you buy the paints whether the five-buck fine in May is worth it. Do not use Magic Markers for the mural, or you will be gassed.

One other scheme abruptly involves the House Director. That is the matter of "sleeping on the floor." Each year some worthy, goaded (perhaps) by folk songs or Japanese movies, fights the good fight to keep the legs off his bed. The room seems far more spacious that way, and besides (he urges), there are no rats here, which is the reason Europeans put the legs on originally. Possibly from a belief in rats, the Office is adamant.

If you want to keep your record clean there are other ways of freshening the room which have astonishing utility. Decorating the windows can be exciting: colored cellophane and masking tape produce a kind of stained-glass effect. In a few hours you can make your room a kind of kindergarten Rheims. Moreover, any extra thickness on your window will make the room warmer in winter. (During the time of year that the windows may not be safely opened, oil of peppermint on your pillow will make the room seem fresh.)

A rug will help a great deal in the cold. Use it as an extra blanket. When the nip abates for a spell, you can use it to sort papers; if properly tucked in around the edges, they will retain approximately correct order for days. But beware of the cleaning people. Usually a threat, they now can ruin you.

A false-bottomed dress dummy or oscilloscope can be used for hiding your diary or Kostelanetz records.

A good reading lamp is worth two and a half friends. If you have extra bulbs and sockets, they can be put to more frivolous uses: under the bed, in drawers, behind the radiator. (If you live off campus, a red light in the icebox is droll. It also flatters aging food.)

When parents come down, however, the room must be redecorated temporarily for practical reasons. They should see:

a) Your bed.

b) Their pictures over your bed, hanging from very dirty strings.

c) Two large cardboard boxes. One is full of papers, the other of clothes. (Book shelves and dressers are temporarily next door.)

d) Many carbons of IOU's thumbtacked to the door. All are specified, "FOR FOOD." This need not be dishonest, for, as we all know, the category of "food" may be broadly interpreted.

Instead of asking for money, try to lend your parents cab fare to Philadelphia. Agitatedly press several bills into your father's hand, close your eyes, and fall back against the door jamb. This should be good for about sixty dollars.

7.

On the Evanescence of Human Relationships.

It has been noticed with more than melancholy by others beside you that life around here does indeed shift and break, and friends fall away, and there are abrupt departures and slow estrangements that, if you ever get a snatch of tranquility, have a rather frightening quality to them. People just go. Even if they continue to go *here*, you don't see them any more.

"Once you walk away from them, they're completely gone." The funny thing about this quotation is that I can't remember who said it.

There is a tale that when your leg is cut off, your toes seem to hurt. It is a little like that with losing people. Nothing happens when you wiggle them, if you get me. And some time you may slip into this train of thought: we are all moths, like, and friendship is shallow, and the human condition is stale and empty, and those things. A solemn, nasal voice in you somewhere will reply that the transience of a relationship doesn't necessarily mean it was barren. But this is knotty and theoretical and that kind of unhelpful thing.

There is a sequence. When you first get here there are so *many* people, and there is a wondrousness just to their presence: possibility hangs over everyone, all is fraught. It would seem you could do anything with anybody. Possibilities freeze into actuality, though, and the past accumulates, and you watch people grow and wizen, gain and lose confidence, and slip away. Sometimes you have to extract people from you, cease talking like them or thinking about them; it is like pulling fishhooks from yourself.

In the learning of this full cycle the game gets less compelling, as at a country fair knowing the odds spoils the fun of the wheel. Where you once maundered on how amazingly appropriate certain friendships were at certain times, you lately slip into the detestable theory that our choices of people are pretty random, and maybe it's all the same anyhow. You can't quite get involved as deeply any more, pleasant as it might be. In the swing and patter of a new relationship, you somewhere hear the echo of the old ones. You plan on impermanence and become more brittle. (Child-pals and family get treated as ever, and you naturally keep a cranny of the heart clean-swept for the One-&-Only, but these things are vaguer and further away than ever.)

Your fun is also damped for an opposite reason: as you feel less bound to people, you are yet once again haunted by thoughts of what could happen between you and them, and whatever you're doing develops a strangled kind of intensity. Though nothing actually does happen, if it were to, it would be your fault, or something. The detachment does not help.

The correct way to think about yourself-and-losing-people is not immediately clear. Possibly the thing to do is learn the difference between knowing a person and having a person. But this is hard to remember, and learning the distinction won't tell you when it's time for which.

8.

Mystical Conversation Between Two Persons Very Much Involved

THOUGH NOT WITH EACH OTHER

. . .

To seek is arduous, but not to seek, wretched.

But you see, it might be one way of finding.

Have you found?

I know I've found something, but it's hard to say what.

Myself, I seek without finding. I know now that mine is the perpetual role of the observer, doing and watching without the investiture of total existence.

Eventually you will find something to believe, as I have. It always happens.

But what can belief give you besides truth? And what if it does?

You can't allow yourself to ask that.

Unless you can force yourself to answer.

And unless the answer can be uniquely an expression and manifestation of yourself, better not to take the first fundamental chance.

Which is conscience.

Except for the intellectual.

But in being assiduous about what seems real, we are slyly treacherous to the self.

While the only important loyalty, indeed, is to the self itself.

Just as in poetry the meaning lies around the words, rather than in them.

Yes, while dialectically the meaning of life lies in us, rather than around us.

However, where insight and scholarship conflict, one must choose the truer.

And it is just at this juncture of happiness and despond where we find the road that leads nowhere.

Except back.

Where I am afraid to go . . . and you?

Would the decision were mine, that I could avoid making it.

Yet hiding every aspect of the problem is a bottomless superficiality.

Indeed.

The final question is to be this: can a soul move directly, or must it always inch tortuously, toward that awe-full question mark?

Which question mark?

That of the final question.

If there were a final answer—life would be worthless. The deception of search is hence its own cause, and justification.

So strange, then, that two irreconciliables coalesce with such seeming ease.

How stranger still than the confundation of existence and its incidentals.

And than the life-nugget itself.

You're right. The exalted state of consciousness of the observer itself partakes of, and becomes a part of, the object.

It is less than ironic, and more than strange, that we fear to reify the insubstantial.

But that, and the ratification of the ephemeral, though crucial, are irrelevant.

Only superficially. The roots of today's mindless conformity reach back further. Unless that we are to understand that each man's grail reposes in the tower of his own spirit.

But the masses can never be made to understand that.

Exactly.

But you invest reality with independent existence.
Independent only of definition, not of instantiation.

9.

2-HR. PAPER MATRIX

This fills the long-felt need for a way of writing an intelligible paper quickly.

The organization has already been done (by me,) and the writer need only copy out and complete the sentences I have begun for him, sometimes picking appropriate alternatives from the ones offered. Study the outline carefully, then jam in the subject.

The subject of—is notably worthy of investigation, not merely for—, but as well for—. I will define the topic as—, regardless of recent controversies:

For years ("we:" psychologists, theologians, etc.) have been beset by the puzzle of—. Its— has indeed been one of the most pressing problems of Xical—. It can be seen as obviously important for several reasons. First, (here full latitude is given for creative originality.) Second, (etc.)

Simply stated, the situation is (was) as follows. (State the situation, simply.)

This, however, is just a basic summary, overlooking the fundamental problem of (opinion, data, interpretation, etc.) There are at least two ways of looking at—. (Invent, if necessary, at least two ways of looking at it.)

The viewpoint I should like to propound is, essentially, a middle-of-the-road one. (Say this regardless of whether it is so or not. It has tested academic appeal.) Let us study the matter by (name the method most approved in the field for its rigor, but use it in the vague sense.)

It is impossible to do justice to—in a paper of this size. Therefore I shall limit myself to a— of the principal—. I realize that by so doing a number of fine points will be missed, but—.

This topic can be properly begun with a—of—. Surely whatever the—can be shown to—is not only (relevant, preposterous, interesting) but at the same time —. This is not to say that —; for indeed, — is (will be) the most (least) — of —.

Secondly, we must consider not only — but the (subsidiary, correlative, upside-down) elements of —. There is no point in discussing the — of Xistic (merits, subterfuge, doctrine) without an open-minded realization that —. Hence, —.

Lastly, the obvious. We may readily criticize — for not —, but are we to make the next assertion, that —? This is a harder — to —.

Hitherto, we might have expected —* and rightly —* that whatever — the — had ever (prepared, evoked, attacked) would at least be — by the other —. We can now no longer be sure. We can rely only on (the evidence of our senses; sources not destroyed in the disaster; subsequent experiments; the dictates of good reasons over bad ones; the potency of his images, etc.) for an indication of the real — that is still to be —. There is only — for what the qualified observer might —.

In the light of these —, it might be — to postpone a strong conclusion for want of —. Directly there is — for thinking otherwise, even the cautious — may assert unqualifiedly that —. Until then, —.

(Good luck! If this matrix is successful, more will be built for more specialized needs, perhaps ones having even greater efficiency. Meanwhile, put the time you save to good use.)

* real dash

I'm Sick of The Subject Too

The topic of conformity is not hardy, but it is at least perennial. The usual viewpoints are dead wrong and it seems time to review the field again.

Player One says, "The world (or America, etc.) is getting too full of conformists—by which I mean people who all dress alike and have the same opinions and stuff like that."

Player Two says, "Ha—but in rejecting conventional conformity, you are conforming to nonconformity, by which I mean you are really acting like a lot of other people you didn't mention before who all also dress alike and have the same opinion."

Bell rings. Pause for spitting; both players rub chalk on their fingers. Now the second round, no more incisive.

Player One says, "the trouble is really that your people don't think for themselves. Underneath you're all self-conscious and scared."

Player Two: "Your people all get their opinions ready-made, just from more unconventional sources. And you're more self-conscious than we are, and scared of being like us."

That's enough of that. The point can be made more swiftly. Observe that both speak now of "your people," "us." This has a basis. Our complex society is nowhere near as unitary as people who dilate upon "society" characteristically urge; there are different groups with a good deal out of common.

Recognize that "individualism" is not, and never has been the issue. Few people should seriously claim that they make up their own minds on every little issue, rather than being washed along (those few are lonelier than any of us). There is scarcely anything wrong with belonging to a group and accepting its values at least on smaller things.

You choose early the side you'll join. If you are poor and benighted, or by endocrine a gullible stodge, you'll probably be taken in by superficials and strive for the hoity-polloi with its wall-to-wall carpets; if you are fairly off but aggrieved, sensitive and sat-on, you will be taken in by other superficials and romp after the rough-raff with its gutsy aestheticism. Whichever side you pick, they'll feed you well if you smile a lot and don't annoy anyone.

Naive anthropologism would say that either faction was equally stalwart and, in fact, right. There is a bit more to it. The issue is complicated by the way the faction lines wobble from city to city, college to college. However, for the most part I think the evidence piles up against those of group A. They are frequently naive and complacent in politics and economic doctrine. They swallow a lot in religion. They don't seem to realize how badly off others are. Parts of their morality just won't do. However, over time they have arrogated to themselves the title "society" (possibly because they are generally in control); and, prissily and lumpily, they prescribe that all society see the bad they decry as bad, the good, good. But this is dim ground for reckoning them to be arbiters of the virtuous, beautiful and genteel. The fact is, thankfully, there is a group that disagrees.

In the light of these remarks, I propose that the term "nonconformist" be internally capitalized and used only to mean "the non-Anglican English man."

11.

The Vigil.

The moment of truth on an all-night paper comes at 10:07, Parrish standard time. All moments of truth come at 10:07.

There is no romance in staying up all night. And the cold reaches a high point about ten of four. A jacket is too constricting so wear baggy sweaters and a loose overcoat. Thin cotton gardening gloves do not interfere with typing overmuch.

For your feet, there is a choice. Ski boots are good if you don't lace them too tightly. But you may not have ski boots. It may help to wiggle your toes. However, if your shoes were fitted in the ordinary manner, it will probably be the case that there is no room to wiggle your toes. Do not take your shoes off, even though this may seem, in the configuration of the moment, the most logical thing to do. You are cold because the air is cold; you will be colder if you expose your toes. Instead find a large wastebasket or gladstone bag and fill it with laundry. Now remove your shoes, quickly putting your feet in the laundry. If they do not get warm, get more.

If your head is cold, a beret is advised. The towel-wound-as-turban is not recommended, as this tends to fall in your eyes and on your shoulders, and despits fastidious re-tying will gradually sink more and more loosely below your ears at last to collapse in a flab. Although the radiators will by now have been turned off (unless this takes place during the terrible "September days," when they are never turned on), you may at intervals warm yourself over a neighbor's hi-fi amplifier. But if you leave your feet in the bag, try to hop as quietly as possible, for he may be asleep.

Now the paranoid throb of something-like-hunger may tighten, until (resolving that it won't put you to sleep) you spend over an hour mixing a thin sandy gruel out of corn meal from behind your bookcase, with some fingerprinted candy and a glass of flat cola.

As the sleep problem reappears (after all) volition figures less and less. You just may not make it. No-Doz loses effect. Fewer ways of staying awake are open to you: sitting in a pan of water is out of season, loudly shouting the words that appear on your typewriter may wake people up. Smelling salts ruin the taste of the cigarettes to whose life-giving sting your lungs are now deadened. Raising the eyebrows no longer opens the lids, but just pulls your head back. In last hopes take a breath and suck hard on your teeth. The taste that comes out from between them is good for six minutes, by which time something may have happened.

Since not, you just slouch, quiescently staring at the nearest written thing, and your heartbeat is very loud.

When it comes, the recovery is dramatic. There is a frenetic explosion of activity, you type like a ratchet and your viscera well up with song. Everything works out. You fly through clouds of reasoning with your mind an eagle, as in morbid and intense alertness thought after decisive thought is packed onto a docile page.

Go out and watch the sunrise.

IN SUCH A STATE

Many of our problems here are physical: sciences, sports, digestion and sleep, even friendship. Those who expected only intellectual challenge are most surprised by this. Not the least difficult part of the physical problem is the fine balance of just how you feel, a balance with flickering and fickle aspects.

The worst hangovers are from drinking and smoking both. One or the other should be quit. The second worst hangovers are from sleeping too much, which is especially easy if you are behind in your work. (Swear in a deputy to get you out of bed, and instruct him to throw water, if called for, but don't blame him when he does.) When you sleep too little you get dizzy, and your hand shakes some; also you feel tired. To avoid feeling tired, you may drink too much coffee. Too much coffee drinking—a temptation even with the aluminum tang of the school coffee—brings jumpiness, temper and worry. Dexidrine, which only works on some people, fights the tired feeling, but seems to make people so happy one might worry about that. Coffee people look down on dexidrine people but dexidrine people look down on tranquilizer people. But tranquilizer people don't care (They m i g h t, if the side effects were fully documented.) People who drink coffee or smoke, or both, have poorer circulation to the hands and feet, and are thus poorer makeouts. Making out improves the c i r u l a t i o n, but also brings hangovers. The whole thing deserves more study.

Come to think of it, study positions also disturb the system. You are only comfortable for a short time in a given reading position, between the time it takes to get settled and the time it becomes intolerable. Sitting positions can be varied less, especially typing. After you sit a long time you get tingles and sweat and chills. In a few hours your chair-seat seems to develop a clump of quills, and your spine slowly petrifies upward. When the sensation reaches your head it feels as though your brain has been folded into a paper airplane. Jumping exercises help, but by the time the blood is flowing again you are so full of animal vigor that no effort can get your mind back on the subject.

When you eat too much you become somewhat inhuman, and the rest of the time, the way things are here, you are hungry. There are many different kinds of food you can have in the room, all with their good points. Chipped beef makes a manlier nibble than cookies. Ken-L-Biscuit is good for your teeth and non-fattening. Canned asparagus or hearts of palm make you feel like a young homemaker. Pumpernickel is a beautiful experience. If you keep cheese in the room it goes bad, as does the room. Terpin hydrate, a wonderful pick-me-up, v i o l a t e s no rules. But remember, still, that food does not help the greater problems, and usually you just feel the same old way.

Only once in a long while are you really run up; but when it comes it's worth it. It is a fine fiddle-fettle that combines exaltation and well-being with crackling personal efficiency. It sinks onto you softly and heavily, like the Doria reaching sea bottom; and is so splendidly pleasant that you don't feel like working at all. It should be observed that you should work when you feel too good to work, because you can, while when you feel too bad to work you can't.

13.

Parents.

Even a child can tell you that you can't deal straightforwardly with your parents, and this problem is worsened—not improved—right to the point of no return (home). Parents, an interest group blinded to political realities, are unable to see this. Parents who really care, feel involved in their children's future and solicitous toward their welfare, these days succeed only in harrying and insulting their children to an unbearable degree.

The kid knows this, learning early to fence with parents, to sidestep and dissimulate. Before his life is his own (not soon), he has to learn the craft, cunning and deviousness to prevent direct interference. Full guile is reached before puberty.

Yet parents, ever fatuous, do not believe that their children could ever want to hide anything: the child is bauble and bairn until he proves otherwise, which is impossible. Not only is there much to hide, by the nature of the case; there is also much to be just not mentioned. You will be unable to tell your parents things they won't understand; and, as time goes, this means you will be able to tell your parents less and less. Of course, in a way it doesn't matter what you tell them, as they will always think something else anyhow; but if you tell them nothing at all they will try all the harder to find out what's really with you, and mostly boggle your efforts all the more. Probably your parents are just trying to understand. But, the way things work, concern and love are indistinguishable from prying and coddling, although there is an inconsequential difference. However, the upshot is that the parent who tries to understand is likely to be very much worse than one who pays no attention.

Equally horrendous in parent relations is perceived slippage. Every parent has in mind just a few things of great evil from which you are to be saved at all cost, and into which you always seem to be slipping. Denying these accusations will do no good. Even if they are somewhat true they are probably irrelevant, at least to your life. Trying to explain will do less good, for (indeed) explanations never accomplish anything between people, and are demeaning.

In most cases, a fight with parents is a kind of prolonged stew ending in a shouted fight, followed by truce, sneaking, disgruntlement and sullen anger until the next fight. Although going to college makes everything better at a swoop, the parents (to keep busy?) begin to believe that you are going to pot at college, and usually threaten once or twice to bring you home again. If they do bring you home the effects will be monstrous.

Undoubtedly they have cultivated elaborate precautions for "dealing with you." Learn to deal back. Certainly at this time, you want to avoid outburst, tumult and ruction. There is no reason to embitter your relations at home. Avoid, in these years of disentanglement, more than a minimum of hypocrisy and pretense.

It is not true that once you get free of them, everything will clear up. Many things will clear up. Live at least on the other side of town; and try not to owe them money.

14.

Administration.

Administrations, according to a British sociologist, tend to add more and more to their ministrations. Maybe that accounts for the annual tuition increase.

It is sometimes thought that the Administration's main function here is hamperment of the student body. The word NO is painted on the campus asphalt in 67 places, and many people think this is typical of Swarthmore. This is biased. Of course, if you go to the Administration for advice, it will acquaint you with insurmountable obstacles for the lowliest project; but anyone who would do that must like the hard way in general.

Perhaps the main thing about an Administration is Policy. It is well to distinguish between Administration and Offices. The Administration decides what is interesting and significant, and sets the Policy. Offices implement it. According to Sylvia J. Powder of the Certification Office, "We just do what we think we're told." An office, by nature, operates for convenience (its own). Students are only here four years, but an office goes on forever; hence unusual requests must be seen in their larger contexts, that is, withheld.

In the making of Policy, there are always many considerations. There are considerations of long-range best: academic freedom, good professors, thick endowments; and the others: respectability and public relations and avoiding 'trouble'. Of course, all administrations worry about 'trouble', a word which means irregularity, complaint from Offices, or trouble. It usually comes from students, which is why students —particularly those active enough to be suspicious—require the particular kind and frequency of supervision that they get. The prudent do not draw attention to themselves. (If you send anyone on the Administration a Christmas card, it is reputedly put in your file.) Remember, too, that there is a right way and a wrong way to take things. You tend to get quite bitter when your friends are expelled, even though you knew it to be politically necessary. But you can't blame an administration for making mistakes any more than a dog for biting.

The Administration also has the function of smoothing things. Deans are good at this. Adept at pouring oil on troubled people, the Dean smiles at the ceiling, creaks his swivel chair and conciliates. The Dean is by nature a portunate e'er-do-well, and sometimes even an alumnus.

Then there is Respectability, which is entropic. Administrators, particularly, cannot acknowledge an itch. It is to be recalled that when one of our Giants graduated he refused the President's hand, but the then-President shook air for appearances.

Some people say that regardless of promises, you can't expect the Administration to improve anything: they are all parley-poopers and deal only in underhanded understandings. This exaggerates. The keystone of the Administration is that rule of derring-don't: Nothing is impossible, within reason.

15.

Manners.

The way this place is laid out generates, in ways sometimes comprehensible, the way that people act, here. And just as in the real world manners form a part of life, so do we have manners here. They are a little different is all. Instead of "Hello," you open with "Say, . . ." and a last name. Instead of saying "You're looking well," one says, "Your beard is coming along fine," or "I see you've finally managed to get them dirty." Instead of "How are you?" one asks, "What did the Dean say?" or "How is your cat?" When somebody's bookbag gurgles, or it is obvious that he is in the wrong kind of company for the hour and place, it is a point of good breeding to instantly say something about the weather, the concert or the exam schedule.

Perhaps the most complex joint obligations here are in food manners. (Not "table" manners, since they include also laps and the floor, and are a bit more rugged.) Food that falls into your lap or onto your clothes may be eaten normally. However, food that falls on the floor—even meat—must first be offered to your dinner companions; only if they all refuse it may you eat it yourself. Stirring coffee with a knife-handle is only permissible when it is very hot; otherwise, use a spoon or a fork. (Always use a spoon or fork when dunking vegetables in tea.) Meat which the knives will not cut may be torn with the fingers. Owing to the meat situation, it is both right and behooving that after a boy has had his second helping, a girl should go and get him a third, since girls get bigger portions. (This is the greatest favor a woman can do a man here.) It is considered gross to remove anything from a friend's plate before he has formally pushed it aside, or stacked something on it. (Like all mannerly traditions, this has its origins in the purely rational. Often in the past people would go unannounced for milk, to find on their return that the whole two square inches of red meat they had been saving was already given to a passing dog.) Finally, it is polite to shout a warning about a forkful of food a companion is raising, and even to strike it from his hand, if it moves excessively.

The boy-girl deal has its own maxims of good conduct. For instance, there is the point of never mentioning whatever other situations your partner may be maintaining, even when you know all about them, and even when there is impending pain on the subject (yours.) But your date, obversely, is expected at least to distribute her (his) holdings among other dorms, so that you will hear as little about it as possible.

Finally, when you break up with (or from) someone, it is thoughtful to be just as sharp and unkind about it as possible, to avoid trailing hopes, amortized anguish and recurrent reconciliation. The breakee's obligation is to feign tense impassivity, both to show you that she (he) really cares like mad, and to avoid a mutual scene, which may well start everything over again, especially if there's a lot of crying. If the crying is done later you can get help from roommates, and so forth, on becoming bitter, which is for your longrun best. But it is here a matter of simple courtesy not to gossip about an ex, for this would serve only to make an already brackish situation the more so, and besides, no telling what'll happen back to you next.

WORDS. 16.

Cisferrocaballatio. Staying this side of the tracks.

Diaphane. Name for undiscovered sheer fabric. Manufacturer must pay me royalty.*

Ethnostyle. Pillar of society.

Goldenstrong. Adjective imputing both virtue and power.

Headhead. State of being head of something.

Heliopractor. Man who sets the sun.

Katzplotz. How you walk when you get back from the Catskills.

Megalothegm. An impressive statement.

Pogonophone. Any device for listening to beards; or a musical instrument incorporating a beard.

Pseudotriskaidekic. As if pertaining to the number thirteen.

Rum. Odd, tough or excellent. (Not to be confused with "rumbullion," a beverage.)

Runch. Wild radish. Presumably, anything tangy which is found wild, rather than eked by ~~civilization~~ cultivation.

Savioress. A girl savior.

Stegomancy. Divining the future from patterns in roofs. On contemplation of the new fallout shelters, for example.

Thonk. Chief thought, main thesis, motivating belief. (Anglo-Saxon. Now ripe for revival.)

Tyroscope. Any device for watching cheese.

Urpferdschmerz. Literally "Primal-horse-sorrow."

Xylothete. A putter of wood. That is, one who puts wood, presumably somewhere. Anyone so behaving. Also, anyone thought to so behave. People who do jigsaw puzzles are xylothetes, among other things.

Maidenrod. Wand for MayQueen.

Anastrophe. Something very large and very nice, happening all at once.

Apicovacantism. Theory that there's always room at the top.

Autopotent. Needing no help.

Beginning. The process of cotton-cleaning.

Benthodule. One who venerates narrow depths, e.g. Francoise Sagan.

Biggening. Enlargment.

Blencifact. An object hastily or poorly constructed.

Cismogrify: Change back.

Contrapolation. Negative thinking. May result in contraptions.

Crackdown. Pantscuff lint.

Eaveslifter. One who speaks so loudly as to be easily overheard.

Exstrument. The sought; an end in itself.

Extravene. Butt out.

Footstrong. Conservative.

Ghollomeisne. A stiff tuft.

Hypodeictic. Not quite capable of being derived from self-evident principles.

Innervation. Pepping-up.

Inquisite. Footsome.

Inviscerate. To stuff things into somebody; to supply details.

Irregardless. Not regardless.

Lingerie. Dalliance.

Macrognostic. Pertaining to the long view.

Minify. To ensmall.

Parthenomonarcheology. The study of Elizabeth Tudor, and those like her.

Pedophage. Dimunitive of "cannibalism."

Phasmoclasm. Destruction of illusions.

Propolation. Positive thinking, ~~usually done under antiseptic conditions.~~ May result in conniptions. Practiced in an antiseptic atmosphere.

Superside. To abound. Distinct from supercide, killing of overseers.

Tautophony. Repetitious music or sound.

Tous-puissant. Highly capable.

Turpojet. Stream of evil.

Welcomize. To make to feel at home.

Xerologue. A dull speaker.

Zusammenheit. Togetherness; opp. of "Apartheid."

*Apologies &c. to Diaphene Corp. of Phila.

17.

Budgeting Time

The best, and easiest, advice to a new Freshman is, "Budget your time." It may be noticed, by the giver as by the getter, that "Budget your time" closely resembles the secular (acollegiate) advices, "Be happy" and "Do good."

Too badly, it is in fact impossible to budget time in the eager sense that people seem to think you can. This is because to budget time you must build from self-evident principles which contradict one another. To wit:

"To each thing its portion and place." It is obvious that anybody wanting really to get things done needs to be systematic, Apollonian, scheduled. He should either eat breakfast or not eat breakfast, but stand by his choice. He should kiss people only on weekend nights. So on.

"Get everything done." It is only reasonable that he should keep at what he is doing until he cracks it, which is straightforward strong and manly. Besides, otherwise you get behind, which is noted for badness.

"Live balanced." Who could gainsay it? If he hopes to live continuously without cracking up, he must meet all the immediate demands of life: sleep, food, exercise. Otherwise you get the weird side effects and the headaches and the eye-swim and the bloat and pretty soon it is also quite bad. So be careful about these essentials.

But moreover, in our enlightened day and age, it may be said without undue pomposity that these dicta of survival show as trivial in the greater perspective of the human true life. An honestly balanced existence requires friendships, excitement, mail, cigarettes, dirty jokes, appointments, and the general panoply of the everyday whatchamacallit. Otherwise you get the nerves and the disgruntlements and the ennui and the soul-itch and the doing crazy things and it may be worse than ever.

"Do each thing well." There can be no doubt that it is only right to do one's best. It is clear, though, that the dynamics of inspiration are such that something must get the short end. In note-taking, good works and getting dressed, procedure is "effective", and may be carried on stepwise within a wide range of circumstances. But to write a paper satisfactorily, or spin a love letter, or successfully hang any of the more delicate necessities, all must be just so, with the clock ticking a certain way and the special welling-up in the something of the psyche.

As for making all these desiderata lie down in one bed: they may all be happy and good, but it takes more than tapioca to make a tapioca-powered rocketship. So we end up:

1. A full seven hours' sleep every night. However, 2. Keep ahead in everything. In many circumstances, 3. Drop things for a fling of some kind. Except when things get behind, which calls for 4. Drastic measures without a whimper, including Up-all-night and Paper-in-an-hour. And also 5. Do good, and 6. Be happy.

This is how time budgets, things as they are. Why just be resigned? It's to be proud of that it works.

18.

THE OUTCAST OF THE IN-GROUP

. . .

There are two aspects of cliques: being in them, and not being in them. Though a glance into the diningroom shows there are hundreds of separate people at college, it is not so simple; there are also inseparabilities. Few people, indeed, have most of their friends singly; generally one's friends ~~and~~ are one's friends' friends.

Of the exceptions, some are by choice, of those people whose interests are special and one-by-one. Others cannot join existing cliques or assemble new ones, either through the accidents of the times or their being distasteful people.

You know, of course, what it's like to be in a clique. You get good, regular people to eat lunch with, and smoke with, and mess around with, and talk to, and the weekend stuff. A clique gives you a settled thing of what is what, who is who and what next. Reasonably settled, of course. For the smallest clique, the couple, things may often be very unsettled. (This latter, having problems of its own, will not quite be considered here.)

Life in a clique can be peppy, scintillating and satisfactory, or monotonous and chafing and stupid. It depends, like a seminar, on the company and setup. You may stand with first roommates and first date, uncomplaining; or chafe even from friends picked late and carefully. You may find yourself the head cheese of the group, or be unrelished jesterscape; good cause to cut loose.

Life out of a clique can be jaunty and exciting or rotten and sticky, and this depends on your attitude and the people you run into. If your attitude is sanguine and cocky, and the people you banter or coffee with are sweet-minded and interested in you, you will likely swing well. If you feel anxious or grim and hang after people who look at you darkly and don't care much, you are poorer off than if you had your own clique, no matter how bad a one. An upshot is that in a clique you may not like it, but without one you may get boisterous and bilious-blooded, and waste even more time than usual, and fall behind.

Two more things interest me: character and prestige. Interestingly, some long-term cliques have long-term features. By tradition, ML 1 is rather withdrawn into itself, C-section upperclassmen are noisy, and there is a hardness about most Roberts girls. (But, of course, the most of us lose that first joviality to everything, often a temporary provision for one's freshman year.)

Then prestige. Some years the ranking clique is an LTC group, some years a Psych Department group, some years a high-music or math-club outfit. One or two cliques with Senior nuclei always have hegemony over the Commons crowd, although their ranks will open for youngsters amiable or dashing. (The king of Commons is on some scales the highest-ranking person on campus; his loyalists certainly show it.) Snobbery, a big deal here, is more than not nodding. One ML 3 man (ML 3 has a sister house) remarked to me, "There are 500 girls on campus, but only 25 women. You know what I mean."

Alumni forget a lot; cliques, too. The harder realities of scorn, unrequited admiration and bitterness among these semi-shifting groups tends quite to disappear less of us slip most readily into a with reminiscence, and the care-dream-picture of college where all these things are enhazed by distractions of the years.

Intellectualisation.

The soul's imagination, especially in the sensitive youth, is ever beset by questions (and answers) of enormous purport. Everybody is tempted to think, from time to time, about how the human condition is basically unreal, and the train never comes till you've finally bought a motorcycle, and time only waits for him who stands and delivers, and the like.

This is the more so for us. Young people always want to go and say very large and very original things. (In contrast to older people, who receive satisfaction and escape criticism by saying large and usual things.) Since, for us, the more portentous insights are very wrapped up with the living of our lives, rather than playful or platitudinous, a lot of earnestness gets put into spiritual self-pingpong.

Straightforward p r o b l e m s, thus, get cast as misrepresented vagueisms in oddball questions. The question, "Should I fall in love?" becomes "Has one will the right to subjugate another?" A matter of simple spiritual practicality, like whether to associate with younger people, is rephrased, "What *is* a human being?" The question, "Should I learn to like beer?" becomes, "Can you still be an individual in the midst of a group?" When wondering whether to take a dessert, one instead asks "What is really the purpose of eating?"

This process occurs with statements as well as questions. Thus you may get the notion that when you kiss a person, you learn something more specially true about the person herself, where, in fact, you just learn how she kisses. The observation, "Sunrises are lovelier than I remembered," turns into, "Memory and truth are two aspects of the same thing." Finding out that one rather enjoys phys. ed. rephrases as, "One is most free at the instant of compulsion." Learning that a girl is nice even though she isn't stacked may bring forth the notion that the spiritual is what counts after all.

There is nothing very new about the process. Some of the best such musing is to be found in great novels, where the sight of flowers or battle starts a hero musing, not on the out-and-out particulars of the thing itself, but on all manner of dialectic generalities by which he can relate the flower to the battle and back again.

The nature of intellectualism is such, unfortunately, as to foster this manner of stuff. It is because to be an intellectual you don't have to be actually right about anything, just intellectual. (Educators, Bohemians, etc., sometimes think they are the only intellectuals. They oversimplify horrendously.) The more big words you know, the easier it is to misstate a situation. (Grubnik's law?)

Let us distinguish between Liberal Arts and Radical Arts. The one picks at things piecemeal, the other tries to splice the antinomies. And if early we suffer for lack of the latter, at length we can be grateful that the first kind is what they teach us, mostly.

Perhaps you think I don't understand what rebellion is. Maybe you think I have always accepted everything, conformed unquestioningly.

Thank you. Go away.

I can't go away until I make it clear to you just exactly what it is you're doing. You seem to think there have never been young people before, to reject the values of society. But you don't seem to notice that you reject these values because of your age, and a few more years from now you'll laugh at yourself.

My age is an unfair argument.

If you were older, you would see how fair it is.

Oh, go take a ride in a Chrysler.

Presumably you think, too, that anybody five years older than yourself is a fatly credulous young modern who can only understand things of one button, and that women surrender their minds at the door as soon as they get married. What you don't understand is that dishwashing machines mean something to the people who use them over and beyond their simple function.

Get off my back.

I don't see what you have against young moderns. People who live in the real world, and don't sulk or stew about inequities or their own fancied troubles, have a right to enjoy the world they live in. If this means suburban life, and Pepsi-Cola, and Stop 'n' Shop, (and "'n,'") and televisions and PTA and the Scouts and salads which contain both cottage cheese and fruit—well then! Why not! That's better than surly sitting-around over Expresso coffee and complaining about other people. You know who you really have to comlain about.

Go sit on a pole.

Perhaps it's hard for you to comprehend the little inconsistencies we have. Like worrying about flies in the house without noticing the filth on the canopener blade. Or taking children to church, not out of belief, but because "it's good for them." You're afraid of being "like that," so all you do is talk about it. You think nicety means prissiness, and elevate for yourself lustiness instead. Probably you'd like to go off somewhere and do nothing but tear pumpernickel bread with your teeth.

Why don't you chop an olive someplace?

Try not to fool yourself with the notion that I'm fighting you. I want only your good. It's honestly, truly right to rebel. I'm not kidding you. But, as everywhere else, there are bounds. Don't you understand, it's not what you say, it's the way you say it.

—.

So authorities ask, "and you wouldn't want that to happen, would you?" and you say, "yes, I would." And you recoil when you hear the phrases "motley crew," "various and sundry," "light on the subject," "Do you indulge?" And every now and then you imitate us in a high voice, crying "We haven't gotten out anywhere for a long time, I wonder what's the matter with us." Now use your natural, God-given intelligence: is that really the sensible way to behave?

Tempus Fudgit

Although it will not happen to you, everyone else who goes to college endures a kind of changing process.

For some this leaves no belief or collarbutton intact. For others, differences: one's voice will be still small, another's will have grown.

Perhaps you will feel mainly relieved to have the idiot expedients of college come to an end, to have done with that peculiar Swarthmore squalor. For the sacrament of graduation, with burnooses and incense and panoply, is cutting you off from it all at a swoop, and you are pressed to recall just what it all was. You have run your cycle out, from the hard gemlike Freshman who on his application claimed to burn to learn, to the jaded ashen senior. Where the Freshman wondered in panic (i.e.g.) whether he had to re-apply to the college each semester, the senior wonders idly what happened to old Hoozis from a couple years ago. And a profound deprivation, the sense of being older, has supplanted the feeling of getting older, a more romantic and interesting condition. It's not that you feel superior, just grizzled.

The Freshman made the mistake of arguing free love with his language teacher, possibly during pronunciation exercises, in response, perhaps, to some professional quip. Or plied his lab proctor with Ambrose Bierce. The upperclassman will make no attempt to change the teachers, having learned that the little he might accomplish is hardly worth the effort. This is one of life's sad lessons. (Changing your friends, standard practice, is different.)

And other things, like how you see things differently. Freshman says: "The seniors look so old." "Gosh, there are a lot of really bright people here." "How did that one ever get admitted?" The senior says, by contrast: "The Freshmen look so young." "There are so few really bright people here." "How did that one ever get admitted?"

But more terrible, if terrible, because you notice it less, is the process of alumnification. Though you feel your powers slipping away you can do nothing, and soon you, too, will be an alumnus.

There is something ineffectual about the alumnus. He comes back and recognizes you and runs over, and 1) doesn't know, most likely, what class you're in; 2) has intent interest in you because he doesn't want to feel that he's getting out of things, which he is.

This is what to watch out for. Since you will not, these will happen: you forget antagonisms, agonies. You acquire warm chuckle. Nostalgia will bemurk your understanding, and in five years when you come back, and walk around with that hint of a dodder, you can think how far away it all is, and how lucky these kids are to be sheltered from the real world. This concept of reality will already show some atrophy.

By this time, perhaps the strongest Swarthmore imprint left is that vague, faraway urge to dine at five-twenty. Some day your host at the cocktail party might ask what the matter is. Smile, tell a patronizing anecdote. You will smile both, and share memories of a college far away that never existed.

22.

Leadership.

It was observed 3600 years ago, or it might have been, that the people who flop the hardest socially are those who hardest aspire to leadership. Sociometers have been trying to confirm this since 1932, a significant date in that field.

Many people are involved with the leadership problem. For those who aspire to respect and eminence on the campus, perhaps the wisest thing would be to set out, with ruthless cunning and delicate care, to cultivate those attributes and faculties that leaders have. First you make a list. Next moves are outside the scope of this article, and possibly you.

The leader is a guy with swoop. The cast of control, which he has, resembles an aura of unconcern and is not directly related with how much he talks or looks about him. He seems early to be in control. Semblance of control creates control. Leaders are at ease, for one thing. Leaders do not flutter, mumble or twitch, and fulminate only when they are safe. Leaders do not need to acknowledge banter, and they refute things selectively. People who bob their heads are not leaders. Neither, I believe, are people who fidget about the mouth, blink, yell, stoop or whine. It will be rejoined that some leaders do seem to stoop. In fact these are not stoopers but slouchers, who fail to stand up straight not because they are selfconscious but because they don't care. It can be hard to tell, when he is alone, whether a person is a leader or just indifferent. Others around the subject will be an index; the others are indifferent to the indifferent, but not to the leader. However, this is tricky; many indifferent people have, through their aura of unconcern, acquired followers, making them leaders. (It is interesting, odd, the part that couldn't care-less-ness plays in sex appeal, personality power and all those. But complementary is earnest eagerness, and spotlighting somebody else with all the attention and solicitude you can dissemble—at your own sweet time.)

The ratio of leaders to led is, generally speaking, a function of conditions: that is, the size of the establishment, the width of contacts, number of leadership-inducing situations (arguments, sings, disasters, riots and rallies, art and so forth.) Of course, we all know perfectly well that there are a very few born leaders and quite a few born sheep, but the vast number of us waver, waiting to have epaulets fall on our shoulders, waiting till nobody else knows the way out of the cave, etc.

Strategy can help. Often it may be preferable to leave a group where everybody is friendly but you get short shrift (you may not be able to measure the shrift at first) for an inimical crowd whose neutrals pay you more attention. If you try to take over the big group too soon you'll mess it, but if you build and curry a loyal strong clique you may putsch later.

The leader without followers is often seen: he has the cast of control even though he controls nobody. (Again, watch the watchers.) Either he will get followers or leave, since the position is untenable. (If his behavior changes he is no longer in the game.) The public figure, a writer or general busy-person, is often mistaken for a leader. He may be influential, but this is different. The whole thing is interesting, awhile.

23.

Boy & Girl.

The boy-girl story here is fraught with problems. In order that they do not seem too abstract or intellectual, we shall in our discussion take the case history approach. Let us examine this week a composite study of the coupled-and-uncoupled sequence as we know it, chronicling by stages a clinical model.

Lessons to be learned at each juncture are listed for reference. Clip this article and save.

My-but-her-hands-are-soft. The lesson here is watch out.

She - is - more - intelligent - than - I - ever - thought - other - people-could-be. Proceed with extreme caution. Get lots of fresh air.

We - seem - to - be - seeing - an-awful-lot-of-each-other. You certainly do, and it is time for a swift critical evaluation — for which, unfortunately, you are in no condition whatever. Immediately stand her up and do something very exciting. If you can think of anything.

Here - is - my - heart - on - a - plate - darling. You can stop watching out, now.

It's - perfectly - safe - and - besides - we - love - each - other. Already begin watching out again. Neither is exactly true.

I-have-never-been-so-happy. By the time you have reached this point you get a nagging feeling that you are lying, which, to be fair, you are not.

If - only - we - could - be - together - under - better - circumtances. You are not getting on too well now.

Why - does - she - have - to - do-that-all-the-time? You have become keenly observant. The interrogative form, incidentally, indicates a shift in attitude.

There - are - a - lot - of - other - girls - here - aren't - there. Yes, there are.

I'm - spending - an- awful - lot - of - time - on - her - aren't - I. Note that the time is spent *on* her, not *with* her. It has taken on the character of money for smoking or automobile upkeep.

Do - you - suppose - we - could - sort-of-taper-off? The intent is not euphemistic; you actually do mean, "taper off." However, that's not what you will do. Since she sees this more clearly than you, do not be surprised at her own ensuing change of attitude.

Let's - please- not - have - any - hard-feelings. Note that the question form has been dropped, again an indication. This stage is a fatuous one. There are always hard feelings.

That's - funny - I - haven't - seen-her-in-days. Not so funny as the next stage.

I - wish - she - wouldn't - look - at - me - like - that - Where - has-it-all-gone? Elsewhere, you fool.

Why-did-I-louse-everything-up? Note the interrogative form once more.

Her-hands-were-so-soft. True. So forget it.

24.

ON SENSITIVITY.

Like Proust or Wolfe, all sensitive people hunger for what we wish it used to be like. But since this is unavailable, it is incumbent to live in the present, to which sensitivity throws up obstacles.

Self-consciousness is one of these. (We all feel eye pressure, but cannot show it.) There are certain times you feel especially more poised than at others. This is a reason for tight clothing: dancing pumps or saris, despite their awkwardness, contain a personal aplomb unattainable otherwise. Also, sit with your back to the wall where you can watch everybody. Take a friend.

Interestingly, you may find that in reality only a few people are making you self-conscious. In your thoughts, the people who hate you know the best—which is not always but only often so. The faraway truth may turn out that you intimidate them as much as they you, but you'll rarely be able to check it.

Confusion in one's views of others may come from your knowing that certain people are hostile to you. Though they look to you hostile generally, you suspect that the way they look is not the way they are. This is over-relativistic. This kind of people often looks that way to others, too, and past a point the appearance is necessarily a significant part of what they are.

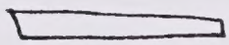
It has often been observed (by the author) that the paradox of self-awareness is an interesting one. If people know you know what impression you are creating, they will reckon that all you do is thought out, and your every intonation or gaucherie will be thought to have explicit significance. On the other hand, if people think you are unselfconscious, you can do practically anything you want and be accepted for real, as long as it seems part of your personality. It is for this reason that some people are excused from being scorned for their eerie mannerisms, or perky little habits which would be revolting in anybody who did them on purpose. The sensitive person has more in his actions to be scrutinized, since it is clear to sensitive onlookers that his actions are deliberate, and are taken with many other possibilities in view. Rather than tell him, "Your zipper is open," others will wonder, "WHY is his zipper open?" Hence sensitive people must watch themselves more than people who seem to act very natural and not think much about it.

It is like that with noticing. If you are a big noticer, you will make people uncomfortable: they can't use euphemisms, or lie out of kindness, if you don't overlook what should be overlooked. And so it will be harder to talk to you. Or make excuses to you. Or be with you.

Two advices. Don't address too many people around you at once. And, bearing in mind that whether you feel out-of-it depends very much on the situation (it is an accessory thought that you may be regularly putting yourself into the out-of-it situation), arrange to be in situations which will make you feel in-it.

25.

CHANGING YOUR WAY OF LIFE.



For a girl, the declining years begin at about 15. Surely by 18 there comes the problem of accepting. Manifold, this: what whom, etc. The subject this week, then, is changing one's way of life. There are two subdivisions: because you have to, and when it seems like a good idea at the time.

When you have to, you had better. I give an example: not studying enough. I cite the things you may try: you may try, instead of studying more, studying with a banjo or capgun in your hand. Don't. And despite your hunches, changing your shoes will hardly help either.

Then there is the voluntaristic kind. When you throw in with a new clique, as you may (the romantic couple, you and somebody else, is the smallest clique,) you are submitting yourself to standards (at least slightly) other than your own. This is quite, of course, like the action of submitting yourself to the social authority of the college milieu,* which you either do soon after you arrive here, or leave. Now, to commit yourself to other people can be as dangerous as rewarding, and changing your whole way of life is not a light switch. N. B.: Make sure, before you make the transition of desire, that you really are in this new clique, or have this new good friend.

You see, we are all smiles about spontaneity, but it may turn out that the moon-eyes, cornsilk hair and tender lips that numbed you in the dusk-ridden pines ride by day with a glass laugh, chemistry riddles and endless gossip about the crowd back in Cheyenne. Then, too, it may well be that she does not also like soggy hoagies, shaggy dog stories or bad beer. For a time you may believe earnestly that you want to learn about thermodynamics, but the reckoning will come. Now a relationship, like a seminar, is to be judged 2 ways: how it's set up, and who's in it. And while the reciprocal presence of boys and girls is a potential source of both fun and profit, its not being confined to guarded garlanded ritual occasions—dances, luaus, soirees—makes spontaneity treacherous. Real World courtship is such that the partners can retract with dignity and without recrimination. This protects, cushions, ensures; with slow and leery entanglement come more certainly incurred obligations, making less likely the gasping realization of how untenable it is.

So, when contemplating changes greater than the NEXT WEEK I WILL REALLY START USING DENTAL FLOSS variety, take care. The more you are prone to drastic change, the far less stable things (in the greatest sense) are going to be. One advantage of this is the possibility of things' getting better. Also the frantic delight at the moment things are seeming to get better. This condition has no other advantages.

What if we didn't do these kinds of thing? There is anyway something to be said for regularity, emotional calm that eliminates both the lows and highs. But on the other, it is perhaps wise—that is, 'sound'—to sample all manner of inquietude before the stakes are too great.

* Not the Administration, but the people.

Slough Enough.

There is a feeling to watch out for. You might call it incipient inanition, or the creeping crud.

It has happened to others. Maybe we have all felt it coming on, but considering what some people are like that is unlikely. Maybe it will happen to you, so you better finish this article.

It starts where you sort of let things slide. You stop writing home (or start) and cut a few more classes than usual, and attend four straight social events (square dances, films, assignations, speeches, etc.) in two days. Then pretty soon you drop an hour exam.

Perhaps this is the moment to pitch in again. But there is no real reason not to let things slide a little more, and really have a good time, and catch up at the end of the semester. So you get cast in Shakespeare and become active in an Activity and make an effort to meet the snack bar people (or Wharton people, etc.). You begin sleeping late, which is very tiring. (With practice, you can go to bed at 3 am and be unjarrable until six-twenty, which is barely time to make dinner if you stop to brush your teeth.)

By this time you have stopped being evasive about how things are going. You even tell people you're going to leave, knowing full well that you'll catch up. You probably have a steady girl friend whom you are telling you'll catch up, and she tells you she is going to catch up.

Suddenly you discover all the cultural events in Philadelphia, and try that for a week. After which you realize how very fake Philadelphia is. Somehow your work has not done itself in your absence. You take up guitar.

The Administration speaks to you unkindly, and for the first time lately you lie to somebody else than yourself, telling the Administration things are going pretty well. It doesn't believe you.

You set about to catch up.

A marvel of efficiency, you knock out an assignment every hour, pausing only for meals (twenty minutes), exercise (seven minutes every three hours), and brisk necessities. By the fourth day, however, a new category must be added, that of odds-and-ends. You add it.

Odds-and-ends is what does it, of course. Two days more and you are taking two-hour coffee-breaks—with a book, of course, but in the midst of sprightly conversation — and you start thinking about the Army.

Perhaps you actually stay through exams, perhaps you leave before that. When you come back in your uniform—or your Rogers Peet suit, which you wear at the office—college will have seemed to change. It's not college which will have changed. Or you either. It's the general situation.

* * *

What is it that makes one thus dissatisfied, disorganized, dispirited? Some say it's neurosis; I say it's the little things. Little things are harder to change.

It's high time, perhaps, that something like a sociology theory appeared here. Mine is, for the most part, this: That we are all sort of stuck in the situation. This theory is very versatile, if you think about it.

MAXIMS.

27.

Kissing is best on an empty stomach.

It is a fallacy to think that if your floor is cleared up things are cleared up. There is, however, a point of critical mess.

Birds that you find always die.

Anonymous letters are usually from somebody else than you would prefer.

Chastity is discretion petrified.

Trying to milk the bull won't work any more on an examination than in the field.

Most pessimists are most optimistic about most things that will hurt them the most.

More girls should learn the hula-hoop.

It is not wise to have comfortable chairs in a room used for Open Houses.

There is a difference between the big wheel and the spokesman.

Lolita is the great American novel.

Do not recriminate someone who is stupid in his hurry. The imagination of confused people is prodigious. Bright people, especially, are capable of a more refined and subtle idiocy than you could ordinarily imagine.

Biology girls smell of formaldehyde.

Life is easier if you eliminate the will-power factor.

The fastest way from ML to Parrish in the winter is not wearing a coat.

You'll never get to know each other unless you stop staring.

I have only one fault. The trouble is it has so many different aspects.

Don't go overboard on this liberal arts "integrated program" business. If you start integrating right away you'll flunk.

Should an individual break the rules of society? Depends on the individual, the rules and the society. Program that on your abacus.

Even worse than the girl who says no prematurely is the girl who, by being passive, makes you feel loathesome.

After four years here you can sit through anything.

Cultural relativity: "It all works out if you're a Navaho." In any case, we hear little from those Navahos for whom it doesn't.

I recommend engineer boots and an inside lock on your closet.

Time is what you can save without having.

The philosophical attitude is held, paradoxically, not by philosophers but by historians. Philosophers are notoriously embroiled in things.

Obscurity must be earned.

These days you are accused of being a sensualist if you kiss a girl's hand.

We tend to confuse the indefinite accumulative, "I'm so far behind," with the sanguine potential, "So far I'm behind."

A rule-of-heart: If it's going to make you feel empty, don't. Otherwise, by all means, but if you aren't sure don't hurry.

The true hypocrite is the person who thinks he can't be one.

Half of life is finding people whose advice you can take. The other half is ignoring it.

You can't fry with 3-in-1 oil.

Love is a matter of give and take. However, one tends to get specialized.

Nothing works out.

Although goodies are food, baddies are people.

The only time you give in to temptation is when it starts ebbing away.

Existence is the art of Subsisting Insistently, isn't it.

There's a little of every man in all of us.

Tears itch.

More Words.

28.

Anapult. A grabbing engine; apple-picker.

Aphibian. Pertaining to God.

Archetexture. Extreme texture.

Argasm. The end of a good discussion.

Artiform. Semblant of having been made by an intelligence.

Backright. Inspoken.

Birthsake. Somebody born on the same day as somebody.

Bonor. Good luck.

Cacography. Illegible writing.

Celeritonic. About the dynamic dimensions of hurry.

Circumcede. To withdraw from surrounding.

Coldhead. Stick-in-the-mud.

Contribulation. Irrelevant suggestion.

Credenza. Ecstatic belief.

Disquantify. To extirpate from scientific social science.

Diumph. 2/3 of a triumph.

Downstanding. Depraved.

Eosophy. Wisdom of the dawn.

Excelibate. Most successfully continent.

Extraloper. Escapee.

Forthwrong. Stupidly domineering.

Geniosyncratic. Of a trait had in common.

Gligent. Careful.

Halitognosticate. Predict about bad breath.

Handicrafty. At once available and shrewd.

Idearrhea. Continuous inspiration.

Immediate. In the town of Media; as, the nearest State Store.

Inquisite. Footsome.

Impex. Important example or experiment.

Implex. That which is implicit.

INFODEP. Department of information.

Ininfrable. Not capable of being ducked beneath.

Keepstakes. For real.

Kinespeliological. Dealing with caves in motion.

Laughbaby. A giggler or thinwit.

Libertygibbet. A republican gallows.

Littleotry. Postjudice.

Longcoming. Talent.

Metatation. Thinking about thinking.

Moby. No such word, luckily.

Murphilinear. With respect to the kind of line that Murphy draws. (Murphy is a girl some of us knew.)

Nemetic. Pertaining to final creeping downfall.

Nominogenesis. The creation of something by naming it.

Nonsequence. Unpredictable result.

Oblivia. Name of forgetful g rl.

Preminiscence. Daydream.

Prepone. Get at.

Proceptive. What helps.

Quadrivial. Of import.

Quadrubed. Fourposter.

Seesay. Eyewitness testimony.

Skyscraper. One who paints the sky; cherub.

Stereophoria. That solid feeling.

Substitious. Very realistic.

Superstitute. To replace with the better.

~~*Upward.*~~ Onward.

Upward. In an interesting or superlative direction.

Upstop. An inoffensive young person.

Vimpex. A very impex.

Vouloir-faire. "Want-to."

Zax. The end.

"Ted Nelson is the finest writer of our generation."

-- said by Jacob Brackman of the New Yorker
to Renata Adler of the *New Yorker*,
in the 1960s,
based on this book.

This is Ted Nelson's first book, from his columns in the Swarthmore Phoenix.

It celebrates the anguish, squalor and heroism of impoverished, sex-desperate students of the 1950s, living the intellectual life in dorm rooms with cracked walls.

These columns were also reprinted at Reed College (without permission), causing Reed students to have an unusual impression of Swarthmore.

5 800101 726541